

There are inequities in the Support At Home program, in particular in relation to the cost of essential life service costs to pensioners, and access to the system.

Personal care (showering assistance) will attract a 5% co payment , approx \$4-\$5 per shower (at 3 showers a week, that's \$12 - \$15 per week), and cleaning at approx \$14 - \$18 per hour. At 2 hours per week, that's \$28 - \$36 per week. A total of \$32- \$40 per week.

Pensioners often can't afford to have heating & cooling, let alone pay for cleaning & showering assistance.

Yes, there's a hardship application, which is over 40 pages, asking all sorts of details & requiring proof of financial information. How will an aged person without family assistance (many are in this situation) be able to go through all the hoops required for hardship assistance?!

This will lead to unkempt pensioners living in squalor, probably in large numbers.

I also have a couple of suggestions for improving access to the Support At Home system.

Getting onto the system is complex & confusing. I have done it for both of my parents, and have assisted friends. I was lucky to get advice & guidance from an OT originally. Not everyone is so lucky. Older persons without support will have all sorts of trouble navigating the system.

Although there is the Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN), it is not advertised, and it took a Greens senator to let me know of it. The contact details of OPAN should be included in correspondence from My Aged Care, to assist people in accessing and navigating the system.

Also, a letter is received saying you need to choose a provider within a certain (fairly short) period. This requires Savy. The choices are listed on a website. And I have heard that you can get a 4 supplier short list if you beg on the phone to the support centre. It couldn't be more difficult.

Why can't a short list be provided in the letter, with a statement that more suppliers can be found on the website, with the link provided.

Also, I have heard that not all pensioners understand the letters, and therefore might not read them properly. Why can't the shortlist of providers be given the contact details of these people, so they can call & follow up with them for a meet & greet meeting ?

If you can't navigate the system, and don't know about OPAN, you don't get support at home services. This is inequitable.